



Snowstorms and Iowa's High School State Basketball Tournaments Facts

Snowfall and the Girls and Boys High School State Basketball Tournaments go hand in hand. Often, we receive inquiries about expected snowfall during one or both of these tournaments. March snowfall in Iowa is quite common and to be expected. The nice thing about snowfall in March is that it won't stay around long.

The High School State Basketball Tournaments have moved around from town to town during their history, but this quick look at snowstorms during the tournaments will just examine climatological data for Des Moines from 1950 to the present and for the first two weeks of March. These two weeks should generally capture any snowstorms over the last 65 years that might have affected travel to and from the tournaments.

The following tables depict the top ten 24-hour snowfall totals, 48-hour snowfall totals and Week 1 and Week 2 snowfall totals for Des Moines from the period 1950-2014.

| Week of March 1-7 | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|------------|---------|---|---------------|
| Ranking | 24-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches) | Date | Ranking | 48-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches) | Date |
| 1. | 7.8 | 03/05/1959 | 1. | 8.6 | 03/05-06/1959 |
| 2. | 7.5 | 03/02/1965 | 2. | 7.5 | 03/02-03/1965 |
| 3. | 4.6 | 03/03/1982 | 3. | 6.5 | 03/01-02/2007 |
| 4. | 4.4 | 03/04/2003 | 4. | 6.4 | 03/03-04/1982 |
| 5. | 4.0 | 03/05/1963 | 5. | 4.6 | 03/01-02/2002 |
| 6. | 3.8 | 03/02/1978 | 6. | 4.5 | 03/04-05/2003 |
| | 3.8 | 03/05/1971 | 7. | 4.5 | 03/04-05/1963 |
| 8. | 3.6 | 03/02/2008 | 8. | 4.3 | 03/04-05/1965 |
| | 3.6 | 03/01/2007 | 9. | 4.0 | 03/02-03/2008 |
| 10 | 3.5 | 03/01/2014 | 10. | 4.0 | 03/02-03/1978 |

The table above shows that in Des Moines, only two, single days and four, two-day periods over the last 65 years have received snowfalls greater than six inches in the first week of March. Six inches of snow is generally the point at which the National Weather Service would issue a Winter Storm Warning. In fact, the four two-day totals greater than six inches actually occurred in four years: 1959, 1965, 1982, 2007. In other words, during this 65 year period, there were only four snowstorms, each spanning two days that brought snowfall greater than six inches; or only 6% of the time. The other 94% of the time, in Des Moines, you can expect fairly good weather the first week of March.

National Weather Service, Des Moines: <http://www.weather.gov/desmoines>



| Week of March 8-14 | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|------------|---------|---|---------------|
| Ranking | 24-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches) | Date | Ranking | 48-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches) | Date |
| 1. | 12.0 | 03/08/1999 | 1. | 12.1 | 03/08-09/1999 |
| 2. | 11.0 | 03/08/1998 | 2. | 11.0 | 03/08-09/1998 |
| 3. | 8.0 | 03/08/1962 | 3. | 8.7 | 03/10-11/1951 |
| 4. | 5.1 | 03/10/1951 | 4. | 8.0 | 03/08-09/1962 |
| 5. | 4.9 | 03/08/1960 | | 8.0 | 03/11-12/1951 |
| 6. | 4.4 | 03/12/1951 | 6 | 5.7 | 03/08-09/1960 |
| 7. | 4.2 | 03/14/1959 | 7. | 5.1 | 03/09-10/1951 |
| 8. | 3.6 | 03/08/1982 | 8. | 4.6 | 03/12-13/1951 |
| | 3.6 | 03/11/1951 | 9. | 4.2 | 03/13-14/1959 |
| 10 | 3.4 | 03/13/1961 | 10. | 3.8 | 03/12-13/1961 |

Similarly, for the second week of March, there were only three, single days and five, two-day periods over the last 65 years that Des Moines has received snowfalls greater than six inches. Two of the five two-day periods of snow greater than six inches occurred on three consecutive days: March 9-11, 1951. Again, around 95% of the time, in Des Moines, during the second week of March, you can expect relatively quiet weather.

| Total Snow During the Week of March 1-7 | | | Total Snow During the Week of March 8-14 | | |
|--|--------------------|------|---|--------------------|------|
| Ranking | Amount (inches) | Year | Ranking | Amount (inches) | Year |
| 1. | 11.8 | 1965 | 1. | 13.3 | 1951 |
| 2. | 9.5 | 1955 | 2. | 12.3 | 1999 |
| 3. | 8.2 | 1982 | 3. | 11.8 | 1998 |
| 4. | 6.7 | 2007 | 4. | 8.5 | 1962 |
| 5. | 6.3 | 1978 | 5. | 8.4 | 1960 |
| 6. | 6.2 | 1952 | 6. | 6.7 | 1961 |
| 7. | 5.3 | 1995 | 7. | 5.3 | 1959 |
| 8. | 4.8 | 2003 | 8. | 3.7 | 1982 |
| 9. | 4.6 | 2002 | 9. | 2.7 | 1970 |
| 10. | 4.5 | 1963 | 10. | 2.6 | 1980 |

1951 bubbles to the top of the heap for the weekly snowfall totals for the second week of March, although the more recent years of 1999 and 1998 rank second and third, respectively. The first week of March in 1965 also brought a lot of snow, with the second and third rankings somewhat less. Once again, only six years of the last 65 (10%) during the first week in March have experienced greater than six inches of snow. The second



week of March is the same at 6 out of 65 years having 6 inches or more of snow during the week. Overall, while central Iowa might in fact have a big snowstorm in the first half of March, it's much more likely that little to no snow will fall and ruin your Basketball Tournament travel plans. Before heading out, remember to check the latest forecasts and travel conditions so you may make informed decisions regarding travel and types of clothing to pack. Above all, have a safe and fun time.